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ABSTRACT

This discussion leader guide for teachers and administrators is designed to accompany four films in a human relations training unit titled "Confrontation." The guide is presented in two parts. Part I outlines objectives and episodes in each film and suggests discussion questions and solutions. Objectives of the first film, "School-Community," are to make school personnel aware of the communication gap between school and community and to encourage participants to take concrete steps toward increasing communication with the community. The second film, "Alienating Language," presents ways in which language can aid instead of prevent effective communication and stimulates viewers to examine their own language. The third film, "Rules and Regulations," examines the reasonableness and necessity of school rules and encourages discussion of ways of enforcing rules so that students' self-respect is left intact. The final film, "Classroom Confrontations," depicts classroom conflict so that participants may examine problems which cause the conflict and anticipate their occurrence. Part II presents four model lessons for effective discussions. Each model organizes skills around problems most likely to occur in human relations discussions and concentrates on one discussion objective. Model I focuses on the non-participant and the content of the film: Model II on the discussion monopolizer and the relevance of the film to the individual school: Model III on techniques for reconciling opposing points of view and proposing solutions: and Model IV on getting off the subject and implementing solutions. The films are available from the Anti-Defamation League. (KC)

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# Discussion Leader Guide for CONFRONTATION:

## A Human Relations Training Unit and Simulation Game for Teachers and Administrators in a Multi-Ethnic Elementary and High School

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## INTRODUCTION

The discussions you will be leading are the most important part of this program. Whether they are just another series of gab sessions that produce nothing more than a mere airing of opinions, or whether they lay the groundwork for specific changes in the human-relations climate of your school will depend, for the most part, on you, the discussion-group leader.

To help prepare you for, and to assist you during this task, we are providing you with this guide. Its purpose is to complement, reinforce, and enlarge upon the information presented in both the training and stimulator films. It is both a workbook to consult as you learn and practice leader skills, and a guidebook to help you prepare for and lead your discussion groups.

## DISCUSSION LEADER GUIDE: PART I
## DISCUSSION STIMULATOR FILMS

It cannot be stressed too strongly that the key to success in this workshop is *preparation*. This is not just accomplished by simply learning and practicing specific leader skills and techniques, but also by (1) thinking through in advance the issues dealt with in the films, (2) anticipating some of the particular directions in which your discussion group might move and (3) preparing effective questions in advance.

The following information and suggestions will assist you in this preparation by refreshing your memory on the content of the Discussion Stimulator Films and describing clearly the intended points and issues in the episodes. In addition, should you need them, a few sample questions and some possible solutions are also provided.

### DAY 1

#### DISCUSSION STIMULATOR #1 (FILM B)—SCHOOL-COMMUNITY

##### OBJECTIVES

1. To make school personnel aware of the communication gap between school and community.
2. To show personnel how the school looks through the eyes of visitors.
3. To encourage participants to take concrete steps toward assisting visitors, and more generally toward increasing understanding and communication with the community in general.

##### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF EPISODES

This program focuses on the ways visitors may be alienated by the institutional procedures, and the attitudes and behavior of school personnel.

##### SCENE 1

In the opening sequence, a parent visiting the school is seen wandering through the halls, obviously uncertain as to where to go. There are no signs, and no one offers to help or to give her directions, although she passes several people.

*Sample Questions for Scene 1*

1. How does the school appear to the woman as she is walking about the hall?
2. How do you think she feels? How would you feel?
3. What must her impression of the school be?

SCENE 2

She approaches an office, and the following occurs:

1. She is made to wait while the two people in the office continue what they are doing. They do not acknowledge her presence, nor is any apology offered for having made her wait.
2. When she is finally waited on, the clerk's attitude is disrespectful, perhaps even contemptuous. She gives the impression that the woman's presence is an imposition, and even makes a face. When she gives Mrs. Brown directions she acts exasperated and condescending.

SCENE 3

Mrs. Brown enters the office to which she has been directed, and is again asked to wait. It might be noted that either Mrs. Brown had not been given a specific appointment, or else the dean failed to meet it.

*Sample Questions for Scenes 2 and 3*

1. What does the receptionist's attitude convey about her attitude toward Mrs. Brown?
2. How might Mrs. Brown interpret her behavior?

SCENE 4

A Spanish-speaking woman comes to the receptionist's office (same as scene 1). During the sequence, the following things occur:

1. It becomes obvious that the school staff is quite unprepared to handle anyone who does not speak English. They have no one on hand who is bilingual, and the clerk is obviously uncomfortable and has difficulty handling the situation.
2. While the visitor is waiting to be helped by someone who speaks Spanish, two boys come to the office window simultaneously. One is white, one is black. The white boy is assisted first. Why?

3. When someone is finally contacted who can help the woman, she is taken to him rather than having him come to her. She must feel confused at being shuffled around.

*Sample Questions for Scene 4*

1. What might have been done to make it easier for the Spanish-speaking woman?
2. What impression did the incident with the two students create for you? What might an observer's reaction have been?
3. Why did the clerk wait on the white youth first?
4. How do you think the two young men reacted to what took place? How might each of them have viewed the situation?

SCENE 5

A formally dressed Negro man comes up to the office desk and asks for Mr. Johnson. Because he is black, the clerk assumes he is the applicant for a custodial position. As it turns out, he is a college professor. The first definition of *prejudice* is "a preconceived idea."

*Sample Questions for Scene 5*

1. The receptionist immediately assumed that the Negro man had come to apply for a janitorial position. What does this assumption say about her? About her attitudes?
2. As a representative of the school, what does her behavior say about the school's attitudes? About the kind of training she has?
3. How must the professor have felt?
4. What might be done to change or modify the behavior and attitudes of people like the clerk?

SCENE 6

The dean finally returns to her office:

1. Mrs. Brown is again kept waiting while she makes a phone call.
2. No apology is given for the long delay.
3. The dean appears to have forgotten Mrs. Brown until she sees her waiting.
4. The prevailing attitude throughout the whole sequence might be described as one of indifference toward Mrs. Brown (at the least) and seems to indicate that her presence is more of an annoyance than anything else.

*Sample Questions for Scene 6*

1. What would you expect Mrs. Brown's reaction to be to her visit to the school?
2. After her experiences, how likely is it that she will be willing to visit the school again?
3. How might Mrs. Brown describe her visit?
4. Would it be unreasonable for her, or for any of the people in the film, to suspect the school staff of being prejudiced even if they are not?
5. What might have been done to improve the situation at the school for each of the visitors?
6. How do you think this kind of attitude is applicable to or affects the students who attend the school?

The main point of the first part of the film is that the school staff is obviously unequipped not only in facilities, but in the preparation and training given staff members, to deal effectively with visitors, especially those of minority groups. There are no blacks on the staff in a school which has black students and, therefore, black parents. The attitudes of staff members demonstrate not only prejudice, but insensitivity to the feelings of others.

*Parent's Attitudes*

At the end of the film, there are interviews with several parents. Some of the most important points raised are:

1. Parents are treated with contempt and are considered stupid by teachers and administrators.
2. Parents are considered to be intruders in the school setting: visits are made as difficult as possible, and involve a great deal of red tape. They are kept to a minimum amount of time. School staff members "aren't used" to having parents around, and find them a nuisance.
3. School personnel tend to "soft soap" issues, rather than to tell the truth.
4. They are seen as being more sympathetic, responsive, and less threatening to white, middle-class parents and students than those who are members of minority groups.
5. Parents, both black and white, do feel alienated; there *is* a racial, social, and mental gap between the school and the community, and some parents feel that it is created intentionally by school staff, both through bureaucratic intimidation and through prejudice.

## DAY 2

### Discussion Stimulator #2 (Film C)—Alienating Language

#### Objectives

1. To sensitize school personnel to some of the ways in which language can aid instead of prevent effective communication.
2. To encourage personnel not to use language which can be offensive to others because of hidden messages.
3. To stimulate viewers to examine their own language, at least in the context of the school, to see what words or expressions might be offensive to others, and what attitudes might lead to their use.

#### Brief Description of Episodes

SCENE 1

The teacher believes that because the student is Oriental, she should be:

1. A good student.
2. More efficient and dependable than other students.
3. Aware of her "responsibility," apparently to her race: "You have a lot to live up to." The assumption is that minority groups must "prove" themselves.

By calling Jane up in front of the class, the teacher embarrasses her, while probably adding to her feeling of separation from the rest of the class. Such behavior on the part of a teacher is certainly apt to have some influence on the rest of the students in the class who may in this way come to accept such stereotypes themselves.

*Sample Questions for Scene 1*

1. We usually think of prejudice or racial discrimination as involving only negative kinds of behaviors or attitudes. In this scene, the teacher seems to be trying to help Jane, and yet isn't she demonstrating prejudiced behavior?
2. What *is* prejudice?
3. What are some of the things the teacher says and/or does which might have a negative effect on Jane in spite of their positive intent?
4. What can one infer about the teacher's attitudes from what she says?
5. Did what she said make it easier for Jane, or more difficult?

SCENE 2

This episode, involving the transistor radio, contains many messages, some of which are open to interpretation by the viewer:

1. The teacher, in putting down music (mostly through her facial expression and tone of voice) might thereby be seen as putting down young people, soul music, and black culture.
2. She uses the term "you people," which apparently refers to Negroes, but could equally well refer to youth, or to people who listen to "that kind of music," or to lower-class students. The main point is that she distinguishes between herself and some "others" whom she cannot understand.
3. She not only brings in the stereotype of poverty, but also casts a slur on the value system of her students, namely, that it is wrong to possess a radio on which one plays rock music when one does not bring a pencil to class.
4. There is the question of student property which is raised by her threat to confiscate the radio permanently.
5. The fact that the teacher let the music go on as long as she did is open to question. It is possible that, had she spoken more politely in the first place, the girl would have turned the radio off completely. When she did not, the teacher should have said something immediately.

*Sample Questions for Scene 2*

1. What does this sequence indicate about the teacher's attitude toward her students' property?
2. What do her facial expressions communicate to them?
3. How do the students probably feel about being referred to as "you people"? What does the teacher mean by it? Why does she use such a term?
4. How might the students react to her obvious lack of understanding of or appreciation for their own sub-cultural values (i.e., her dislike of rock music, her assumption that they should have pencils and school materials because they possess radios)?
5. In what other way might she have handled the situation?

SCENE 3

In this sequence, the teacher makes quite a few blunders involving both hidden messages and bad teaching methods.

1. His use of sarcasm to correct the student's grammar is both ineffective teaching (creates resistance) and poor human relations (it says implicitly "you're stupid"). In this case, unwittingly or not, it acts as a slur, because in the black in-group or sub-cultural language it is a universal practice to make verb-subject agreement "errors," e.g., "he *go* to the office;" "he *have* a new car."
2. His comments on the necessity for using "good English" show several things:
   a. A lack of awareness of the possibility that many of his students may never have the chance to hold executive positions because they are black, or that they may not feel that they have such an opportunity.
   b. An ignorance of the language of the black sub-culture.
   c. His unfortunate use of the term "garbage collector" as a stereotype to symbolize the opposite end of the social continuum from "business executive," and the number of derogatory value judgments which his use of the term carries. In fact, his remarks may amount to social condemnation of some of his students' relatives, to judge from their reaction.
3. He also uses the labels "lower class" and "culturally deprived" which are in themselves alienating.

*Sample Questions for Scene 3*

1. How effective is this teacher's approach?
2. Is it likely that he would be able to motivate his students to speak "proper English" by dealing with them in this way?
3. What might he have done in this situation to get his point across without being insulting or putting the student down for speaking as he does?
4. Why do you think the students reacted as they did to his use of the label "garbage collector"? What did this mean to them?
5. How do you think they felt about his applying the terms "lower class" and "culturally deprived" to them?
6. What is wrong with the use of labels to refer to people? Why are they used?

SCENE 4

The coach in this sequence demonstrates what seems to be a typical adult "man-to-man" way of controlling students' behavior, by the use of sarcasm or ridicule. Such a method can convey a great many messages. In this case, some of the messages are:

1. A lack of understanding of the cultural and personal significance of a "natural."
2. An apparent distaste for the hair style, or at least,
3. A desire to make students conform to the "norm," which in this case would be the clean-cut, all-American athlete kind of image.

*Sample Questions for Scene 4*

1. What was the coach actually communicating to the players?
2. Why should hair style be considered relevant to athletics? What difference does it make to the coach how his students wear their hair? Even if it does make a difference to him, personally, has he any right to say anything about it?
3. What is the effect of using ridicule to get people to change the way they behave?

SCENE 5

In this episode, a teacher unwittingly or unthinkingly uses the term "boy" to a Negro. Because white men have used the term "boy" to condescend to or belittle Negro adult men (similarly with "girl" or "gal"), the term now has insulting, emasculating connotations.

*Sample Questions for Scene 5*

1. What are the connotations of the word "boy" to Negroes? Where do they stem from?
2. How do you think the student interpreted what the teacher said to him?
3. Does the student's behavior seem understandable?
4. What might your reaction have been in the same situation if you were the teacher? If you were the student?
5. What is the justification for using a term such as "boy" when addressing *any* young man?

SCENE 6

In this series of faculty-room episodes, the following things should be noted:

1. A teacher uses "gal" to refer to a Negro while another teacher uses "lady" to refer to a Hungarian. The first teacher, in talking about her new housekeeper says "Negro" loudly enough for the other (black) teachers to hear.
2. The same teacher uses the term "you people" to the two black teachers when asking them a question about how to handle a difficult "little colored boy" in her class. The whole discussion carries the implication that "they" should be able to tell her how to handle the situation because they are also black. The teacher also states that the trouble she has with the student is due to his refusal to show proper respect for her as a teacher. She implies that this is because he is black.
3. There is a definite lack of sensitivity to the two black teachers' feelings throughout the whole discussion.
4. In the last episode, there is much tossing about of stereotypes ["Well, you know what kind of neighborhood he comes from."] in which the teachers reinforce each others' aggressions.
5. There is no suggestion of a possibility that something might be done to help the student.
6. There is much moaning and groaning about the boy's brother who will be coming along the following year, and one can imagine that he will be doomed before he has begun.
7. The whole atmosphere is very unprofessional.

*Sample Questions for Scene 6*

1. Why is it necessary to specify the race or national origin of one's housekeeper? Why do you think this teacher did it?
2. How does it sound to have one teacher refer to her housekeeper as a "colored *gal,*" and have the other teacher speak of hers as a "Hungarian *lady*"?
3. How would you expect the two black teachers in the room to react to this?
4. The white teacher is certainly insensitive in her remarks to the two black teachers, and yet there is more than just a lack of sensitivity which underlies her remarks. What do her basic assumptions seem to be about Negroes?

5. How would you describe her attitude toward blacks on the basis of what she says? How do you think she might treat black students in her own class?
6. How might you respond if you were one of the two black teachers?

## DAY 3

### Discussion Stimulator #3 (Film D)—Rules and Regulations

#### Objectives

1. To get school personnel to question the reasonableness and necessity of certain school rules, with special focus on those dealing with dress codes, hair length and style, and so forth.
2. To encourage personnel to examine the rules and regulations in their own schools, and to discuss ways of changing those which are ineffective or unnecessary.
3. To encourage discussion regarding ways of enforcing rules so that students' self-respect is left intact.

#### Brief Description of Episodes

##### SCENE 1

The first episode deals with the requirement that textbooks and other materials be brought to class every day. Two examples are given:

1. In the first instance, the teacher refuses to listen to the student's explanation for his failure to bring his book to class, and immediately sends him to the counselor.
2. In the second situation, she accepts his explanation, which turns out to be a reasonable one, and allows him to share another student's book.

Although the teacher deals reasonably with the specific problem in episode two, the question is raised about what to do if a student continually forgets his materials, or if several students had done so.

##### SCENE 2

This episode involves a problem for which the solution actually depends on the teacher. The teacher in this episode, after accusing a student of being asleep:

1. Forces the student into a confrontation in front of the class by insisting that he was asleep, and giving him the ridiculous and prob-

ably impossible task of remembering the last word of the poem being read.

2. Puts himself in an awkward situation by pushing the student to the point of anger, and then when all else fails, by simply pulling rank. He is made to appear unreasonable and foolish, and the student is only further alienated.

SCENES 3 AND 4

In both of these episodes, the rule in question involves clothing.

1. Miniskirt: The rule seems ridiculous to the student, and its enforcement appears arbitrary. Why should one student be singled out for punishment? It also seems unreasonable to send the girl home to change rather than telling her not to wear skirts that short again. The dean makes no attempt to talk to her in a friendly or understanding manner, or to attempt to work out an arrangement with her.
2. Sunglasses: Two solutions are given. Neither seems very successful. In the first solution, the student is sent to the counselor for refusing to remove his sunglasses. No explanation is given for the rule, it is simply enforced by the teacher. In the second solution the teacher avoids the issue, and treats the student as though he were in elementary school. Nothing is really solved.

SCENE 5

In this scene, it appears that the student's reason for swearing should at least be investigated before action is taken, but:

1. The teacher makes no effort to determine why he is angry.
2. She makes no attempt to find out whether he was really provoked.
3. It seems very likely that she is reacting so strongly because she is affronted. This sequence raises the question of rules about profanity. To some groups, it is not a serious matter when someone swears. Although white middle-class teachers may be morally shocked when a student uses profanity, many of them think nothing of using it themselves.
4. Her immediate enforcement of the rule in such a highly charged situation makes her seem very rigid and insensitive to both causes and consequences.
5. She allows too much time to elapse before taking action.

*Sample Questions*

1. To what extent do items of clothing, such as sunglasses and hats, or fashions, such as skirt length or hair styles, affect a student's learning ability?
2. Should schools have the right to legislate about such matters?
3. Do you think that in some of the instances depicted teachers were reacting to more than infringement of rules? Perhaps in some cases, rules are the result of a lack of understanding and acceptance of students' values, needs, and self-perceptions.
4. Isn't it possible that a student's failure to obey a rule such as that regarding class materials, or the one about sunglasses, is the student's way of communicating something to the teacher? If a student consistently fails to bring books to class, perhaps he is indifferent to the material. When this happens, especially if it involves more than one student, what can or should a teacher do about it?
5. Are there certain times when it is advisable to ignore a rule or to be lenient in enforcing it?
6. What should a teacher do when he disagrees with a particular rule?
7. What might be done about changing unnecessary or unenforceable rules?
8. How should one go about enforcing *good* rules?
9. How can students be helped to understand the necessity of some rules? How can they have a part in making and enforcing such rules?
10. What are the good, bad, and questionable rules in your school?
11. Should students be consulted about the rules and regulations to which they must conform?

## DAY 4

### Discussion Stimulator #4 (Film E)—Classroom Confrontations

#### Objectives

Because this program is by far the most open-ended of the series in terms of solutions offered, its objectives must also be open-ended.

1. To get participants to think about the kinds of problems which cause conflicts like those depicted, and perhaps to anticipate their occurrence.
2. To encourage school personnel not only to think about how to handle such problems should they occur but, more important, how to prevent them from occurring.

## Brief Description of Episodes

### SCENE 1

In this sequence, a teacher has started class when a Mexican American student walks in, obviously late. She gives no excuse for her tardiness and the teacher says she will have to write her a late slip. As the girl starts to sit down, one of the boys in the class turns to the other and says, "Maybe she took a siesta." The class then begins to sing "Manana."

### SCENE 2

A new student enters a class dressed as a hippie. The students give him a bad time, laugh at him, and make fun of him. In the first part of the episode, the teacher takes no action other than to tell the class to quiet down.

A second possibility is shown with the teacher reprimanding the class for their behavior.

In a third possibility, he tells the class to remain after school, to which they respond negatively.

### SCENE 3

Two black students enter a classroom arguing and continue to argue after the class has started. The teacher tells them several times to be quiet, but each time they start to argue again until one student says, "You're a mother," at which point violence breaks out.

### SCENE 4

A class is split into two groups to work on a play. One group is composed of three black boys and one white girl. The girl comes to the teacher and asks to change groups. The teacher refuses and finally the girl says that she just doesn't want to work in a group with Negroes.

### SCENE 5

A student in a class asks about the Supreme Court ruling on fair housing. She thinks it unfair because she has seen what "they" do to a neighborhood. Maybe it's alright for "them" but it isn't alright for her. The black girl sitting next to her wants to know who she means by "they" and an argument ensues. When the teacher, who is white, attempts to intervene by taking the

black girl's arm, the girl says, "take your honky hands off me," and proceeds to accuse both the teacher and the white student of being prejudiced.

SCENE 6

In the midst of a discussion about the City Council, a black student in the class wants to know how many black people there are on the council. He and other black students in the class get into an argument with the teacher whom they accuse of being "brainwashed." The scene ends with the black students walking out of class with the remark, "Nothing but white devils and Uncle Toms."

*Sample Questions*

1. What steps might a teacher take in preventing some of the incidents presented in this film?
2. How much of an obligation does a teacher have to attempt to change or modify prejudiced attitudes or beliefs on the part of his or her students?
3. What might be done to change student attitudes?
4. If a teacher does not attempt to correct prejudiced attitudes, is she in effect endorsing them?
5. How can a teacher handle a confrontation situation such as that in the final episode without seeming to be "pushed around?"
6. A common argument for not allowing students to voice their protests in class or during school times is that if they "get away" with it once, they will continue to take advantage of the teacher. How might such protests be turned into constructive situations?
7. Should a teacher allow her class openly to discuss issues which students raise such as those regarding black power, human rights, students' rights, and so forth?
8. How might such discussions be made a part of, rather than a departure from, regular classroom procedure?
9. Might such discussions or talks serve as a "safety valve" for the airing of students' opinions and protests without the need for more disruptive action?
10. What steps might be taken in your school to hear and deal with student complaints?

## SOLUTIONS PROGRAM I
### School-Community

It should be stressed that these "solutions" are here for *your* use, *only* as a last resort, in case the group is unable to come to any solutions. Under no circumstances should the leader "give" them to the group, but rather ask questions that will allow the participants to arrive at them for themselves.

1. Human Relations Training Program for both teaching and non-teaching staff.
2. Provide signs directing visitors to specific offices.
3. Arrangements for a specified individual or individuals to greet visitors and to assist them in finding what they are looking for.
4. A coffee room or some similar place for parents to go while waiting to see someone, or to talk with teachers.
5. Arrangements for taking care of and assisting non-English speaking visitors.
6. Sensitization of school personnel to the problem, and encouragement of both staff and students to help visitors who come to the school.
7. Ethnic background of the staff should reflect that of the school population.

## SOLUTIONS PROGRAM II
### Alienating Language

1. Encourage teachers and staff to search their own language for possible alienating words or expressions.
2. Get personnel to stop using phrases such as "you people," "culturally deprived," "lower class," and words such as "boy," "colored," "girl," or "gal."
3. Discover what the offensive assumptions are that any of these words or phrases can communicate and understand clearly why these assumptions or attitudes offend. For instance, why do people resent having their identity restricted to that of a particular group, as in "you people"?
4. Learn to be aware of relevant beliefs, tastes, attitudes, life views of any sub-cultures represented in your school, including the sub-culture of youth. Find out what issues and areas of experience are important to the students in your school; find out about words or phrases that you don't understand.

## SOLUTIONS PROGRAM III
### Rules and Regulations

1. Examine the rules and regulations in your school to find out which ones are unnecessary or unenforceable.
2. Make plans to change or eliminate bad rules.
3. Arrange to discuss the rules with students, not only to find out which ones they think are bad, but which they think are good. Talk to students about the enforcement of rules.
4. Try to encourage faculty not to enforce rules arbitrarily. Teachers should be willing to explain rules and the reasons for enforcing them.
5. Set up channels for students and teachers to voice their complaints about rules and/or the ways in which they are enforced.
6. Let students participate actively in forming, or changing, the rules and regulations of their school.

## SOLUTIONS PROGRAM IV
### Classroom Confrontations

1. Attempt to prevent incidents:
   a. Listen to what students have to say. Find out from them what issues may become a source of conflict, or deep concern.
   b. By understanding issues which concern students, and by establishing communication with them about these issues: for example, by discussing rather than avoiding "difficult" subjects, be honest—as honest as possible—with students.
   c. Give students an opportunity to let off steam about things at school which are liable to cause trouble: race, war, and other problems facing our world, and if you don't know enough about any of these subjects to involve students in a meaningful discussion, then find out.
   d. Help students work out some of their problems; give them some responsibility and some power in deciding things which concern them.
2. In cases where the incidents cannot be prevented:
   a. Attempt to be understanding of the issues involved, rather than immediately punitive.
   b. Approach problems openly. Try to work them out with students; be interested.

c. Be more flexible. (This could also be preventive.) Try to make the classroom situation open enough so that things can be discussed before or after they happen.

3. Most of the above are personal changes. On a school-wide level:
   a. Set up some kind of student or student/faculty committee which will help to air student grievances. Try to realize that students have as much right to complain and have their complaints listened to as faculty members do.
   b. Be willing to consider things like curriculum changes. Be willing, in general, to at least discuss and seriously consider student recommendations for changes. Work with students, not against them.

## DISCUSSION LEADER GUIDE: PART II
## DISCUSSION LEADER SKILLS

### MODEL LESSONS

The purpose of these lessons is to help prepare you to lead effective discussions, by providing you with the basic skills a leader will need in this kind of workshop.

### SKILLS

The lessons organize skills around the problems most likely to occur in human-relations discussions. Neither the problems nor the skills are exhaustive, but they are basic and universal and for this reason you can apply what you learn in these practice sessions to whatever additional problems might occur. Because the model discussion lessons have been designed specifically for practice sessions, each model focuses on only *one* problem and some ways of dealing with it, in the following order:

| | |
|---|---|
| Model #1 | The non-participant |
| Model #2 | Dominator |
| Model #3 | Polarization |
| Model #4 | Getting off the subject |

### OBJECTIVES

In addition to leader skills, the lessons recommend discussion *objectives*, or phases, to insure that each session yields productive results. These objectives of course overlap, and their duration and emphasis will be relative to the needs of a particular group. Again, for the purposes of the training periods, each model focuses upon *one* objective, and closes by showing the group move from that objective to the next one:

The models are organized as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Model #1 | Discussion content of stimulator film |
| Model #2 | Determining its relevance to your own school |
| Model #3 | Proposing solutions |
| Model #4 | Implementing solutions |

In other words, each model discussion lesson demonstrates a *problem* and presents ways of dealing with it, and at the same time concentrates upon one discussion *objective*.

COMMENTS

Throughout all four lessons the model leader displays several important qualities or behaviors that you should note. They are basic to any effective group discussion leading:

1. She is never dictatorial, bossy, domineering. It is apparent that her function is not so much to "lead" as to *make possible* a good discussion. She is not a captain, but a tool.
2. For this reason she is *objective*. She is not judgmental, prescriptive, condescending, or side-taking.
3. This objectivity allows her to maintain an open, *receptive* climate for the group. It is important that participants feel that *any* opinion can be heard, and will receive its due. The leader does not interrupt or cut off the expression of a thought, even if it is off the subject. Rather, she takes the full expression of that thought and *redirects* it to the interests of the discussion.
4. She clarifies, or gets participants to clarify, restate, or amplify unclear or incomplete statements.
5. As she clarifies, redirects, resolves polarity, quiets an aggressive monopolizer, she consistently keeps the dignity of her members intact.

## PREPARATION

In order to be most effective in leading your group, you will need to spend some time in preparation.

1. You should watch the discussion-stimulator films closely. Decide what the issues are, how they are applicable to your school, and what solutions you would suggest. If your group gets stuck on any of the objectives, you should be prepared to help them with good provocative questions, suggestions, or comments.
2. Give some thought to your school situation. Decide how sophisticated your group is likely to be with respect to the material in the films. Be prepared to move quickly through the first objectives if you think your group will be familiar with the issues or slowly and carefully if you think the ideas will be new. For some schools, the problems we present are already well-known, and implementation will be easily started. Other schools may find these issues startling and quite novel. For teachers in these schools, an awareness and understanding of the problems themselves will be a big step forward.

3. Try to be flexible in leading your group. You should not be so rigid in following the objectives that you turn your group members off. A too rigidly structured discussion can defeat its purpose. For instance, you will have to exercise some discretion in keeping your group on the subject. The leader must decide whether a digression is fruitful. For example, in the *transistor radio episode*, the subject is attitudes and alienating language; what if the group wants to talk about noise in the classroom as a human relations problem and begins to discuss various ways of dealing with noise? You will want to be sure that they have thoroughly dealt with the material covered by each objective before you move on to the next. You will also want to be sure that they do not get repetitious.

## Model #1

## NON-PARTICIPANT

In almost any group, you will find one or two members who do not participate in the group interaction. It is desirable that each member join in the group discussions, not only for his own benefit, but for the benefit of the group. A silent member may have something very valuable to contribute. He may also, by his silence, discourage other members from speaking. Sometimes it may not be possible to get an individual to participate, but each person in the group should at least feel that his contribution is valued.

If you notice a member not participating:

1. Try asking him a direct question. If he responds with a simple "yes" or "no" answer, ask him a more specific question, related to his interests when possible, which will require a more extended answer.
2. If he seems very shy, you can let him know that you are going to call on him before actually doing so. This will give him time to prepare what he wishes to say, and make it easier for him.
3. When he does answer, respond positively to what he says and attempt to get other members of the group to react to his comments. This will help to draw him into the group, and may actually get him involved in discussing his ideas with others.

## Model #2

## MONOPOLIZER

If a person is monopolizing or dominating the discussion, you must attempt to take focus away from him *without being punitive*. There are several possible ways to do this:

1. Acknowledge the point(s) that the person is trying to make, and then get someone else in the group to contribute.
2. Summarize what the person has said, and then change the focus of the discussion.
3. If neither of these is effective, you will need to take a stronger position. You should firmly insist that others in the group have a chance to express their opinions.

## Model #3

## POLARIZATION

Perhaps one of the most frequent problems in group discussions is that of polarization. It can also be one of the most difficult to bring to a satisfactory "conclusion."

You should first realize that there are two kinds of polarization with which you may be dealing. The first kind is the most difficult to deal with and is almost impossible to arbitrate. This occurs when two people, or groups of people, hold opposing points of view about the subject under discussion. If this happens, and there appears to be no way of reconciling the two points of view, it is best simply to terminate that particular topic of discussion, and move on to something else.

The second kind of polarization occurs when two people misunderstand each other, and their misunderstanding leads to an argument. If this happens, both parties may get "backed into a corner" and may be difficult to reason with. It is consequently advisable to stop such a polarization before it gets too involved.

If as group leader you become aware that polarization is developing and take action before either party becomes too entrenched in his position, either of the following (or both if necessary) may prove successful.

1. Clarify the points being raised by each member, and try to stop the members from arguing by bringing in a third party.
2. If this fails, or if you feel that the points have already been well clarified, summarize the areas of disagreement, and try to find some common ground of agreement from which to move on. It is best to at-

tempt to find some middle ground which both parties can accept without feeling that they have compromised their positions.

## Model #4

## GETTING OFF THE TRACK

One of your most consistent responsibilities as group leader will be to keep your group on the track of the discussion. There are several ways in which a group can get off the subject, and a variety of ways in which such situations can be handled.

In the first meetings, you may find that group members tend to be too general or theoretical in their discussions. They may get off on long, anecdotal sidetracks which are interesting, but not to the point. To avoid this we suggest the following procedures:

1. If members are being too general or too anecdotal, ask them to be more specific about what they mean; ask them to clarify the points they are making. Use probing questions to get at what members are really talking about.
2. If the group gets off the subject matter completely and seems to have forgotten the real issues, summarize whatever points have been made, and then refocus the discussion back onto the central issue.

In any of the situations presented above, you will want to figure out what your own mode of action would be, as well as practicing the methods illustrated in the Model Lessons. The solutions given are intended to be guidelines, not perfect answers to problems.